The Southern PATRIOT

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Poll Tax Laws Killed In S. C., Tennessee

The poll tax as a requirement for voting in South Carolina was killed by the legislature on Feb. 13th.

In 1944 when the legislature, in a move to circumvent the Supreme Court decision concerning the right of Negroes to vote in Democratic primaries, repealed all laws regulating primaries, the poll tax was eliminated so far as primaries were concerned, but it remained in force in the general elections. One factor in the final demise of the tax was the fact that politicians were concerned that too many Negroes and not enough whites were paying the tax in order to qualify to vote in the general elections.

Tennessee passed a law so limiting the poll tax that it is virtually a dead duck.

The Tennessee legislature amended the poll tax law rather than repealing it because, some years ago, after the legislature had voted for repeal the State Supreme Court, in one of the most amazing decisions in American legal history, ruled that the state in this instance had no authority to repeal a law that a previous legislature had enacted.

D. C. "Playground", a photograph by Marion Palfi, see story on page 3.

ON THE RELIGIOUS FRONT

Southern Clergy Join Fight On Bias

With racial segregation in public schools, vehicles and other facilities being rapidly abolished by judicial decree throughout the country, the embarrassment of the Christian clergy has become acute.

If the denial of equal rights to all citizens is unjust in the eyes of the secular law, then where lies the morality of Jim Crow church schools, "lily-white" churches and "separate-but-equal" church activities? In the tenets of the Christian ethic which insists upon the equal and indivisible value of all human souls, thoughtful Southern clergymen are finding no justification for the traditional practices of their various sects. In communities where equalizing court decisions have been quietly assimilated into the pattern of life, must-grown churches have seen their role of spiritual leadership weakened.

"Segregation is living on borrowed time. With the constitution being considerably more active than the conscience of late, the church might have to adjust its morality to measure up to the mores of the state." This statement by the Presbyterian, U.S., Synod of Alabama in 1950 is indicative of the soul-searching going on all over the South.

The clergy is coming to recognize that it has underestimated the humanitarian maturity of its flocks, and has been too timid in proclaiming its divine message.

A striking and immensely significant indication that the church will not much longer dally with discrimination can be found in the categorical condemnation of racial segregation delivered last month by Archbishop Joseph F. Rummell of New Orleans.

In a letter to the clergy and laity, the Archbishop demanded that:

¶ Segregation must disappear in Catholic churches and in all Catholic activities.

¶ Constant effort must be made toward breaking down segregation in social and civic activities.

¶ The Negro worker must be assured adequate wages, medical care and old age security.

He detailed his reasoning on these points as follows:

"The principles of Christianity, charity and justice should prompt us to recognize the Negro as the creature of God, made like ourselves after the divine image and destined for happiness in this life and in the next. These same principles of Christian charity and justice should prompt us to cooperate in breaking down the painful lines of segregation in the ordinary relations of human life and in the fields of education, industry and opportunity .

"According to the regulations of Canon Law, all workers, and this must include Negroes, should receive fair compensation for their

(Continued on page 2)

Southern Clergy

(Continued from page 1)

labor . . . security for their families and adequate provision for periods of illness and old age. Too often is the Negro, just because he is a Negro, deprived of these considerations.

"In social and civic relationships there should be a constant endeavor towards breaking down customs of segregation which contribute so much to the embarrassment . . . and the discontent of our Negro fellow citizens. Negro children and youth must have equal educational opportunities with white children . . .

"The lines of segregation must disappear in our churches, not only physically but in the true spirit of Christian brotherhood, in the seating accommodations, at the confessional . . . and in general in the reception of the sacrements and sacramentals of the church."

The Archbishop's statement of policy has not yet been put into practice in any of the areas he cites. Should it mean the opening to Negroes of the extensive Catholic school system in New Orleans, as was decreed in St. Louis by Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter in the Fall of 1947, the beneficient impact upon the community would be almost without precedent.

At a nation-wide meeting of Methodist ministers in Houston, Texas, another protest against discriminatory practices was registered.

Here, by unanimous vote of the 168 church leaders present, a resolution was passed condemning the Jim Crow Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist church.

In administrative lines, the church is divided into five geographical jurisdictions and one "central" jurisdiction which governs Negro conferences no matter in what section of the country they may be located.

As Rev. D. R. Fletcher of Philadelphia put it, "We should get the record straight here now, for it has been charged by many white leaders that we Negroes are satisfied with the jurisdictional arrangement and with a segregated church society."

The resolution will be submitted for action to the 1952 General Conference.

At the same time Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, announced the admission of two Negroes to the Perkins School of Theology. They will be the first ever to study there for credit.

* * *

The events reported above are exciting, hopeful developments. But as there must exist "foot-draggers" and shilly-shalliers in every broad social group, the theological world has its share.

At Emory University in Atlanta, recalling the University's refusal last summer to admit a Negro applicant to the theological school, the students in that division of this Methodist-endowed institution polled themselves on the question: "Would you be willing to have Negroes attend the Candler School of Theology?"

Of 254 students polled, 234 voted "yes"; 13 "no" and seven were "undecided."

In announcing these results, the student council said:

"We think we are morally obligated to make the opportunity for equal education available here. We are tired of giving first-class propaganda to Communism by continuing our failure to practice what we preach."

Now this is good. Except one might be able to think up a more positive and humane reason for equal education than that of dodging Communists.

But how did the student paper, the Emory Wheel, receive these tidings?

The "theologs" were most courageous, it was said editorially. "The wisdom, however, of their exhuberant stand at a time when the Theology school is in the midst of a funds-raising campaign might be questioned."

The editorial contended that any admission of Negroes would almost certainly end all financial aid from lay supporters and would, under Georgia law, end certain tax benefits Emory enjoys.

Well then, what are the theology students and their delicate moral senses to do amidst all these eminently practical obstacles?

This is the yarn the **Wheel** spins:

"If the theology students are as interested in combatting this particular phase of the South's intellectual and emotional status quo as the poll would seem to indicate, we suggest that they begin, **upon taking up their careers,** concerted efforts toward erasing the stigma of prejudice from Southern thought."

The emphasis is ours. And the essence of the advice given seems to be: "Don't practice what you preach here, wait until you go out and preach if you feel you have to practice." Which poses an odd question: what 'concerted effort' does the **Wheel** think might be effective if this poll, which was certainly a concerted effort to rectify the balance at Emory, is misconstrued right on its home grounds?

A Modern School, part of the photographic exhibit CHILDREN IN AMERICA being sponsored by the SCEF.

EDUCATION

Jim Crow Cost Jolts Carolinas

In an odd decision, Federal Court Judge Johnson J. Haines ruled in favor of Negro plaintiffs who charged inequality in North Carolina public school facilities, but dismissed the case.

The judge admitted in detail that the treatment given Negro children in the Durham public schools violated provisions of the U.S. constitution.

His odd handling of the charges, however, may make an appeal necessary. During the time this appeal takes, some observers conjecture, "the shocked school officials may find time to regain their senses and correct the discriminations that exist."

But when these officials start adding up the bill that "separate-but-equal" facilities cost, the taxpayers will be the next ones to be shocked.

It is estimated the tab will be a cool $200 million.

The **Charlotte News** accepts this prospect stoically, and, with what we suspect is a dead-pan irony, comments editorially as follows:

"We have said it before, and we say it again today. Segregation, as an abstract moral principle, is indefensible. Yet we are not dealing with a principle alone, but with a system that has its roots in tradition and custom.

"As long as Southerners prefer to maintain segregation in the public school systems, and to maintain the costly duplicated facilities that segregation requires, they will have to pay the bill."

A possibility that the **News** does not explore is that perhaps the succession of such monstrous bills will cause a meeting of minds between those who value abstract moral principle and those who value their hard-earned dollars. And the two groups, working together, may well uproot those hoary parasitical growths which drain the land of its vigor.

At the same time, in South Carolina, Gov. Jimmy Byrnes, speaking in behalf of a $75 million school construction bond issue, asked that it be passed despite an impending suit by Negroes asking the end of Jim Crow education in the state.

We'll always have segregated schools here, he pledged, hinting at some undescribed legal dodge which would accomplish that.

Then after a few slams at "Washington politicians" and "Negro agitators" he went into an oh-so-familiar song-and-dance which began:

"The overwhelming majority of colored people in this state do not want to force their children into white schools . . ."

For a man that's knocked about some, His Excellency seems rather naive in his reading of recent developments.

SCEF Photo Exhibit Begins Wide Tour

SCEF sponsorship of the first South-wide tour of the widely-acclaimed photographic exhibit "Children in America" has been warmly received by public libraries, schools and art galleries in the region.

The exhibit, the work of Miss Marion Palfi, a Rosenwald fellow, opened at the Louisville Public Library last month. Bookings for the next 12 months have been lined up, including most major Southern cities, and requests are still being received.

It is a probing analysis of the plight of America's underprivileged children, documented with candid shots taken in all sections of the country.

Two Sections

The 12-panel exhibit falls into two sections. The first shows children blighted and made delinquent by inadequate housing, schools and health facilities. A particularly effective shot in this group portrays three unsmiling children "playing" in a filthy alley within sight of the Nation's Capitol.

The second section, entitled "Toward A Better Children's World," presents the more optimistic side, recording the work done by various agencies and groups.

Miss Palfi has been called a "crusading documentarian." Although artistic considerations are never slighted in her work, she prizes her photographs primarily as "evidence"—undeniable evidence of social wrongs which may force people to take action.

"Children in America" was the first exhibit ever to be sponsored by the Children's Bureau of the Federal Security Agency. Institutions at which it has appeared include: The New York Public Library, The University of New Mexico, the University of Missouri, the Detroit Public Library. It has also been presented to the annual meetings of various national and state social work organizations.

Watch for its appearance in your area.